

REMARKS

The above Amendments and these Remarks are in reply to the final Office Action dated October 27, 2006. Claims 1, 2, 4-12 and 17-30 were pending in the Application prior to the outstanding Office Action. Claim 17 is being amended. Claims 9-12 are being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the inventions therein. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 4-8 and 17-30 remain for the Examiner's consideration, with claims 1, 17 and 24 being independent. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections are respectfully requested.

I. Allowed Claims

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for allowing claims 1, 2, 4-8 and 24-30.

II. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 9-12 and 17-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,009,455 to Doyle et al. (hereafter "Doyle") in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,003,547 to Hubbard (hereafter "Hubbard").

III. Discussion of Claims

Claims 9-12

Applicants respectfully disagree with the rejection of claims 9-12, for at least the reasons set forth in the previous Reply. However, to expedite issuance of this case, Applicants are canceling these claims without prejudice or disclaimer of the inventions set forth therein.

Claims 17-23

The sending step of claim 17 has been amended as shown below.

"sending a work available signal to each service provider that was previously sent the idle assignment signal but for which a task is available from the job management apparatus, to thereby inform each service provider that had stopped sending request work signals to thereafter send a work request signal when the service provider is available to perform work."

The underlined language, added by amendment, also appears in allowed claim 1, and is mentioned in the Examiner's reasons for allowance. For similar reasons to why claim 1 was allowed, Applicants respectfully request that claim 17 should be allowed. Applicants also respectfully assert that such amendment does not raise a new issue and should not require a new search, since such language was already considered by the Examiner when the Examiner previously examined claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the amendment to claim 17 be entered, and that claim 17 as amended be allowed. Claims 18-23, which depend from claim 17, are patentable for at least the reason that they depend from claim 17, as well as for the additional features that they add.

IV. Conclusion

In light of the above, it is respectfully requested that all outstanding rejections be reconsidered and withdrawn. The Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned if he can assist in any way in expediting issuance of a patent.

No fee is believed due in connection with this Reply. However, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 06-1325 for any matter in connection with this reply, including any fee for extension of time, which may be required.

Respectfully submitted,

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